

From wildfire to forest regeneration: TUI Care Foundation launches TUI Forest Rhodes

- *New three-year project will carry out restoration activities across 80,000m² of land in southern Rhodes affected by the 2023 wildfires*
- *More than 3,000 trees will be planted alongside the installation of irrigation infrastructure and fire-prevention measures*
- *Around 1,500 volunteers are expected to participate in restoration activities, including tourists as well as employees of the tourism sector including crew members of Marella Cruises, TUI's UK cruise line*

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Berlin, 22 October 2026. *Three years after devastating wildfires swept across the Greek island of Rhodes, a new initiative is bringing together local organisations, tourism businesses and volunteers to carry out restoration activities in areas affected by the fires. The TUI Care Foundation is launching TUI Forest Rhodes, a three-year project that will plant more than 3,000 trees and undertake restoration work across 80,000 square metres of land in southern Rhodes. Implemented in partnership with Greek environmental organisation Gia Ti Fisi, and as part of the Rhodes Co-Lab initiative, the project will also create opportunities for local communities and visitors to participate in tree planting, environmental education and other nature-based activities.*

The wildfires of 2023 caused extensive damage to the island's natural environment, destroying large areas of forest and affecting wildlife habitats, local livelihoods and surrounding communities. The loss of vegetation has increased the risk of soil erosion, and wildlife displaced from affected areas has increasingly moved towards populated and tourism areas in search of food and water. The project site is located close to a protected wildlife refuge that provides habitat for a variety of animal species, making the surrounding landscape an important area for conservation activities.

TUI Forest Rhodes will be centered around an existing olive grove. More than 3,000 trees are set to be planted over the next three years, including endemic species selected for their suitability to local conditions and tolerance of fire. Restoration activities will also include soil management measures and conservation-focused agricultural practices. To support the planted trees, the project will install an irrigation system drawing water from a natural spring and supported by the island's water network, alongside fencing and fire-prevention infrastructure. An existing stone building at the project site will also be renovated and transformed into an Education and Information Centre. The centre will provide a dedicated space for environmental education, volunteer activities and visitor engagement, offering information about the island's ecosystems, the impact of wildfires and the restoration activities taking place in the surrounding landscape.

Connecting visitors with the island's natural environment is another central element of the initiative. A new nature trail will allow visitors to explore the project area and learn about local biodiversity, forest ecosystems and the process of landscape restoration.

Educational seminars, guided experiences and tree-planting activities will offer opportunities for tourists, residents and students to participate directly in the project.

Thomas Ellerbeck, Chairman of the Board of the TUI Care Foundation, said: "The wildfires in Rhodes highlighted how important the island's natural landscapes are to local communities and the tourism sector alike. Through TUI Forest Rhodes, we're bringing together local organisations, tourism businesses and visitors to support the restoration of areas affected by the fires. What makes this initiative particularly meaningful is the opportunity for people to get directly involved – whether by planting trees, volunteering or learning more about the island's natural environment. We believe tourism has an important role to play in bringing people together and mobilising support for initiatives that benefit the places they visit."

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The project is already engaging the tourism sector in hands on restoration activities. On 16 October 2026, crew members from *Marella Discovery*, operated by Marella Cruises took part in a volunteer tree planting event at the project site. These efforts will help stabilise the soil, restore biodiversity and support local recovery following the wildfires. During the event, 25 volunteers learned about the island's ecosystems and the restoration work underway, while making a direct contribution to conservation efforts in a destination visited by Marella Cruises. The activity provided a meaningful opportunity for the tourism sector to support both environmental restoration and local community needs.

Joel Hipple, Cruise Operations Director at Marella Cruises, said: "Rhodes has long been an important destination for our customers, so it's incredibly meaningful to support efforts to restore and protect the island's natural environment. We're proud to support initiatives like TUI Forest Rhodes and work alongside the TUI Care Foundation, local partners and communities to help create a positive and lasting impact in the destinations we visit. This is a project that not only helps regenerate areas affected by the wildfires but also creates opportunities for local people and visitors to connect with and care for the island's unique natural landscape."

In addition to its environmental activities, TUI Forest Rhodes will support employment and local livelihoods. Over its three-year duration, the project is expected to create or maintain 45 jobs through olive grove maintenance and agricultural production. These activities will connect the restoration work with local economic opportunities and the continued use of the land for agricultural purposes.

TUI Forest Rhodes is part of the TUI Care Foundation's international TUI Forests Programme, which supports tree-planting and landscape restoration projects in tourism destinations, alongside community participation and environmental education activities. The project also contributes to the Rhodes Co-Lab Sustainable Destination initiative, a collaboration between the South Aegean Region, TUI Group and the TUI Care Foundation.

About the TUI Care Foundation

Building on the potential of tourism as a force for good, the TUI Care Foundation supports and initiates projects which create new opportunities and contribute to thriving communities in tourism destinations all over the world. Connecting holidaymakers to good causes, it supports education and training opportunities for young people; drives the protection of natural habitats and the marine environment; and helps local communities to thrive sustainably and benefit from tourism. The TUI Care Foundation builds on strong partnerships with local and international organisations to create meaningful and long-lasting impact. The independent charitable organisation was founded by TUI, one of the world's leading tourism businesses, and is based in the Netherlands.

About Gia Ti Fisi

Gia Ti Fisi is an environmental organisation dedicated to protecting and restoring the natural environment and cultural heritage of Rhodes and the surrounding Dodecanese islands. Through reforestation activities, biodiversity monitoring, environmental education and awareness-raising initiatives, the organisation promotes a sustainable relationship between people, tourism and nature, while creating practical tools for long-term environmental stewardship.

About Marella Cruises

[Marella Cruises](#) is part of TUI Group and is the third largest cruise line in the UK, with more than 30 years of cruising experience sailing across the Mediterranean, Caribbean and Canary Islands. The fleet consists of five ships: Marella Discovery, Marella Explorer and Marella Voyager, alongside two adult only ships, Marella Discovery 2 and Marella Explorer 2. Marella Cruises offers all inclusive as standard, with tips, flights, food and drinks, accommodation and service charges included. Customers can enjoy award winning West End style entertainment and a high standard of onboard service. The cruise line offers a wide range of Cruise & Stay holidays, giving customers the flexibility to combine their cruise with a hotel stay in destinations across the Mediterranean, Caribbean and Canary Islands. Supported by TUI Airways' network of regional airports across the UK and Ireland. Marella Cruises has also been recognised for its onboard service, receiving Good Housekeeping Reader Recommended accreditation every year since 2019.

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